Amendments to the Specification:

Please add the following new paragraph after the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 10

Fig. 13 is a side elevation view similar to Fig. 8 showing the clearance dampening element of Fig. 9 positioned relative to the shaft and tube.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 5, with the following amended paragraph:

Referring to Figs. 9, ~~and~~ 10, and 13, a telescoping shaft assembly 40 incorporating a clearance damping element 50 that is a second embodiment of the present invention is shown. The clearance damping element 50 includes a tube engaging portion 52 and a shaft engaging portion 60. The tube engaging portion 52 includes a body 54 having an open end 56 and having a diameter ~~d1~~ d5 configured to interference fit about the tube 108. The shaft engaging portion 60 has a body 62 that is generally an extension of the tube engaging portion body 54, being coplanar on the inner and outer surfaces therewith. A phantom line is provided in Figs. 9 and 10 to distinguish the portions, although they are generally formed of a single cylinder or other desired shape. As in the previous embodiment, a plurality of axial slots 64 extend into the shaft engaging portion body 62 such that a plurality of fingers 66 are defined. A projection 68 extends inwardly at the forward end of each finger 66 to define an area of reduced diameter d3. Again, diameter ~~d3~~ d6 is less than the outside diameter s1 of the shaft 109. In the present embodiment, each of the projections 68 includes a series of splines 70 along an inner edge for engaging with the splined surface of the shaft 109. However, splines are not required on the projection or on the shaft 109.